Self-Esteen Levels in Relation to Grade Point Average

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This study is designed to show a relationship between self-esteem and grade point average (GPA) among college students. Undergraduate college students from Lindenwood University participated in this study. The survey used in this study was designed by J.J. Messina (1999) containing questions a subject's family, personal, social, and educational life. The students were asked if they would like to participate in a survey randomly. Upon completion of the survey and informed consent they received a feedback letter. The data I collected showed a weak relationship, however I believe it was due to the fact I only surveyed 25 subjects.

This study was designed to show a positive relationship between self-esteem and grade point average (GPA) among college students. The researcher hopes that this information can assist students in possible understanding their struggle with their low GPA. A number of studies have been conducted that have used the same variables that support this researcher's hypothesis.

Most people assume the goal for most college students is to improve their own academic performance. To improve one's own performance it is necessary to improve GPA. A number of academic studies have shown a relationship between low academic performance and low self-esteem, as well as high academic performance and high self-esteem. Bankston and Zhou (2002) concluded that self-esteem and academic achievement are correlated positively.

Feeling positive about ourselves (positive attitude) appears to be what most of us believe that self-esteem is. A certain area that I am interested in exploring is a student's academic self-concept. Before the year 1980 researchers computed correlations between self-esteem and academic achievement. Until then a lot of studies reported positive correlations ranging from .20 to .40. However, correlations between academic performance and IQ range form .50 to .70. These results show a moderate relationship between academic performance and self-esteem. However since correlation cannot imply causation a new method arose to find the causation between the two.

Noris and Wright (2003) took their study a little further. They explained that achievement, situational optimism, and striving were very important when considered as ability variables, when they were used as predictors of academic achievement. Yates (2002) also found a relationship of optimism and pessimism. Yates found that a students academic performance was predicated on their level of optimism (can I learn more) and pessimism (I have learned all I can). Students who went into the classroom wanting to learn performed much higher with an optimistic attitude.

Another condition that is also linked with self-esteem is self-efficacy. The positive similarities between performance and self-efficacy are reported widely. Also, a lot of research has been conducted in a different range of settings. "The ideal conditions that maximize the self-efficacy and performance relationship are unlikely to exist in real-world settings where many decisions are made about complex issues, with relatively unclear knowledge of the tasks to be performed (Lent & Hackett, 1987). To further this idea Lane & Lane (2001) found how self-efficacy can assist in coping with the intellective aspects of a certain program.

Investigations has uncovered that self-esteem is a factor in persuading reactions to achievement. This led to the discovery of a relationship between self-esteem and expectancy for success. Very few studies have been done, but Kemper (1978) believed he discovered that disconfirmation of expectancies can lead to much stronger emotional responses than confirmation does. Forsyth and McMillan (1981) submitted that following performance in any academic environment, students seem to respond somewhat emotionally, attribute causality, as well as set future expectations for their own performance.

Bloom (1977) conducted research over the past twp decades, and they believe that the importance of academic achievement related to self-esteem cannot be emphasized enough. They believe that school performance seems correlated with self-esteem at least to a moderate level. Students with high self-esteem are able to conduct their everyday lives with a better degree than those with low self-esteem. He also branched a little further and found that self-esteem and achievement were also generally correlated.

A very troubling bit of information showed that contradictory evidence if just as strong. 1,500 students were not affected by self-esteem nor does self-concept seem to have affected educational performance 5 years after graduation. Also, research indicates children's academic self-concept is determined by their academic performance. This researcher knows this is not entirely related to my experiment, but this researcher is also convinced that if we start dealing with this problem at an early age higher GPAs will be obtained in the future.

Method

Participants

A survey developed by J.J. Messina was distributed over the course of 2 weeks to 22 undergraduate participants at Lindenwood University. Of these 22 participants the average age was 19.5 years. There were no specific boundaries on these participants besides being enrolled as a student at Lindenwood University. They could be male/female, freshman/junior, or anything in between. The researcher surveyed 25 participants, but was only allowed to use 22 because of their GPA not being registered.

Materials

In this study all participants were asked to complete 30 questions on a self-esteem survey developed by J.J. Messina. There were two different forms of this survey to counterbalance the results. This does not mean that Form A has different questions than Form B. It simply means that the questions are presented in opposite orders on the 2 surveys. An example of some of the material on the survey was that I tend to have difficulty finishing a project from beginning to end. I isolate and am afraid of people in authority roles. Each question had a rating scale of 1-5, 1 meaning never, and 5 meaning almost always.

The experiments did not occur in any one place. I used any natural environment possible such as; the lounge in Aires dormitory, the Butler Library, Young Hall, and the computer lab ate the Spellman Center. The only attribute that these settings had in common is that they were all quiet while the participant was filling out the survey. There were no sign up sheets, and the experiment was conducted completely at random. Before the survey took place each participant was required to fill out a consent form which

clearly stated that they were 18 years of age, they would have total anonymity, and they would be releasing last semesters GPA. After the consent form was filled out with a pen that I provided. Upon completion of the survey each participant was given a feedback letter just in case they wanted to inquire about the results of the experiment.

Procedure

Each participant was given five minutes to complete the survey, and they were also allowed to stop and ask questions if they had any. Once the data was collected the results were handed to Professor Dr. Nohara-LeClair for the participants GPA scores. To keep anonymity the names were cut off the survey. The only thing left was the survey score and the relating GPA. The collected data was taken from random students at Lindenwood University. The subjects did not have to make an appointment on a sign up sheet, and there was no designated time. In this experiment the independent variable was the survey, and the dependent variable is the total score on that survey.

Results

The experimenter conducted a Pearson correlation on the program SPSS in order to test the experimenter's hypothesis. The experimenter found that the $r = .107$. Even though it showed a weak relationship in the direction that I was hoping for it did not produce enough of a relationship. As a result I had to accept the null hypothesis.

Discussion

The experimenter believes that if allowed more time to conduct the experiment it would have yielded results that would have produced a stronger relationship. The reason for this is because there would have been more time to look for more participants not only at Lindenwood University but through the Human Subject Pool as well.

Some of the extraneous variables that the participants dealt with were no consistent setting, time of day, their attitude during the day, and whether or not they were in the mood to complete the survey or not. Also the experimenter could not have foreseen any family situations that were present at the time of the survey.

The survey seemed to be reliable. This could have been due to the fact that the experimenter had limited participants, but the researcher believes that some of the questions were a little confusing. If the experimenter was permitted to conduct the experiment a second time the experimenter would develop original questions relevant to everyday life. The researcher would also increase specifics in the experiment. The experiment was just to general. Specific time, specific place, and specific group of participants would be necessary to contribute to the validity (intended to measure) of the experiment. Also, the researcher would have only used freshman, thus making the Human Subject Pool that much more important. This would have been done because freshman seems to care a lot more about their grades than most seniors do. The researcher would have also tested males and females differently. Improving the academic performance of both males and females would take different educational techniques. The researcher also believes that test-retest would have been a better way to conduct this experiment (see Appendix A).

Future studies that can be done as an implication of my research would be to test whether or not having proper expectations would increase self-esteem. The researcher does not believe that testing self-esteem in relation to GPA is informative at all considering the highest relationship shown was moderate by Bloom. When the number of extraneous variables is an s high as it is the experiment should be altered to include all

the necessary aspects in finding ones academic performance. Having said this, a causation experiment should be done in order to retrieve the proper information targeted.

This experiment was a very nice educational experience. I enjoyed working alone, because I was able to learn how all the processes work. The experimenter would rate this experience a 10.

References

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Appendix A

Survey (J.J. Messina, 1999)

1=never
2=rarely
3=sometimes
4=frequently
5=almost always

1. 1 2 3 4 5 I seek approval and affirmation from others, and I am afraid of criticism.

2. 1 2 3 4 5 I guess at what normal behavior is, and I usually feel as if I am different from other people.

3. 1 2 3 4 5 I isolate myself from and am afraid of people in authority roles.

4. 1 2 3 4 5 I am not able to appreciate my own accomplishments and good deeds.

5. 1 2 3 4 5 I tend to have difficulty following a project through from beginning to end.

6. 1 2 3 4 5 I get frightened or stressed when I am in the company of an angry person

7. 1 2 3 4 5 In order to avoid a conflict, I find it easier to lie than tell the truth

8. 1 2 3 4 5 I have problems with my own compulsive behavior, drinking, drug use, gambling, overeating, smoking, shopping, etc.

9. 1 2 3 4 5 I judge myself without mercy. I am my own worst critic, and I am harder on myself than I am on others.

10. 1 2 3 4 5 I feel more alive in the midst of a crisis, and I am uneasy when my life is going smoothly; I am continually anticipating problems.

11. 1 2 3 4 5 I have difficulty having fun. I don't seem to know how to play for fun and relaxation.

12. 1 2 3 4 5 I am attracted to others whom I perceive to have been victims, and I develop close relationships with them.

13. 1 2 3 4 5 I need perfection in my life at home and work, and I expect perfection from others in my life.

14. 1 2 3 4 5 I seek out novelty excitement, and the challenge of newness in my life with little concern give4n to the consequences of such action.

15. 1 2 3 4 5 I take myself very seriously, and I view all of my relationships just as seriously.

16. 1 2 3 4 5 I have problems developing and maintaining intimate relationships.

17. 1 2 3 4 5 I feel guilty when I stand up form myself or take care of my needs first, instead of giving in or taking care of others' needs first.

18. 1 2 3 4 5 I seek and/or attract people who have compulsive behavior.

19. 1 2 3 4 5 I fell responsible for others and find it easier to have concern for others than for myself.

20. 1 2 3 4 5 I am loyal to people for who I care, even in the face of evidence that the loyalty is undeserved.

21. 1 2 3 4 5 I cling to and will do anything to hold on to relationships because I am afraid of being alone and fearful of being abandoned.

22. 1 2 3 4 5 I am impulsive and act too quickly, before considering alternative actions or possible consequences.

23. 1 2 3 4 5 I have difficulty in being able to feel or to express feelings: I feel out of touch with my feelings.

24. 1 2 3 4 5 I mistrust my feelings and the feelings expressed by others.

25. 1 2 3 4 5 I isolate myself from other people, and I am initially shy and withdrawn in new social settings.

26. 1 2 3 4 5 I feel that I am being taken advantage of by individuals and society in general; I often feel victimized.

27. 1 2 3 4 5 I can be overresponsible much of the time, but I can be extremely irresponsible at other times.

28. 1 2 3 4 5 I feel confused and angry at myself and not in control on my own environment or my life when the stresses are great.

29. 1 2 3 4 5 I spend a lot of time an energy rectifying up my messes and the negative consequences of ill-thought-out or impulsive actions for which I am responsible.

30. 1 2 3 4 5 I deny that my current problems stem from my past life. I deny that I have stuffed- in feelings from the past which are impending my current life.

_____ Total Score